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## Inter-Racial Coöperation

Contributions to this Department will include material of three kinds: (1) original discussion, suggestion, plans, programs, and theories; (2) reports of special projects, working programs, conferences and meetings, and progress in any distinctive aspect of the field; (3) special results of study and research.

### THE APPROACH TO THE SOUTH'S RACE QUESTION

M. ASHBY JONES

THERE can be no intelligent approach to the race question in the South without remembering the fact that the Negro was a slave. This fact is always more or less present in the consciousness of the white man of the South and plays the most potent part in determining his attitude toward the Negro. This does not for a moment mean that the white man thinks that the Negro ought to become once again a slave, or that he would if he could bring back the days of slavery. It simply means that his conception of the Negro as a personality has been inherited from the days of slavery. Few of us are given to anything like careful definitions, so that the average man in the South has never attempted to accurately state in words his thought of the Negro, but I am convinced that if this thought were accurately worded it would mean that the Negro was something less than human.

This is not necessarily an unkindly attitude. I am thinking for the moment of the better classes of the South—those who are descendents of the slave-holders. As a class they have inherited a benevolent feeling toward the individual Negro while at the same time they have inherited a social and political fear of the race en masse. This type of Southerner would not say that the Negro is not a man, but his thought may be fairly interpreted by the statement that he is a slave kind of man. This kind of a man is only fitted to fulfill a social function of service within a limited sphere. To allow him to step outside of that sphere would be to render him inefficient and hurtful to society in general. This is my interpretation of the meaning of the popular Southern phrase "the Negro's place." This is a sincere Southern creed, and many of

our best people believe that the limitations which they place upon the life of the Negro are for the highest good of the Negro himself. Within these limitations, however, the individual Negro is treated with a kindness and good-natured condescension which often tends to "spoil him."

Here is to be found the deadly wrong of slavery. It cannot be expressed in the mere statement that one man owns another, nor can it be told in any terms of physical cruelty. Granted the most benevolent paternalism that ever held a people in slavery, and there is still the deadly indictment against the system that the child of a slave even before it born has had the definition of its personality predetermined for it, and the metes and bounds of its life already fixed. No greater crime can be committed against a personality than to rob him of a right to make the definition of his own manhood and to determine the pathway of his own destiny. We of the South have "carried over" this idea of the Negro from the days of slavery. This is the social significance of the thought of the white people that the Negro is something less than human. "The Negro's place" is the psychic limitation which we place upon his development and achievement.

This definition of and consequent attitude toward the Negro on the part of the better class has had a most serious effect upon the disadvantaged class of white people in the South. These people, with little or no education and no kindly sentiments and traditions inherited from the past, also accept the definition of the Negro as being something less than human. The primary assumption of such a man is that he is better than any Negro because he is white, and that he has certain rights superior to the Negro

because he is white. It is inevitable that this class is thus robbed of the steadying moral consciousness of the responsibility to deal with the Negro by the same standards by which he deals with the white people. When we remember that to the low-grade man the idea "human" is not a very high ideal of life we can see how terribly dangerous it is for him to have a conception less high of any being. To my mind it is this dehumanizing of the Negro in the thought of the better class which is responsible for the dehumanizing of the Negro in the thought of the lower class, which in turn is responsible for the unspeakable record of barbarities committed against this weaker race.

In searching for a pathway which will lead to a just, wholesome, and harmonious relation between the two races, it is essential that in the thought of the white people the Negro should be granted all the rights which pertain to human beings. If this is once granted, under our fundamental statement of democracy he has some "inalienable rights." We must not place any limitations which will deprive him of an equal chance to "life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness." We need not stop to discuss the question of how much the Negro is capable of development. Be that possibility great or small, he has a right to a fair opportunity for the fullest and highest development of which he is capable. So to my mind our first task is to change the thought of our people in regard to the Negro, so that they may approach the question of his rights in the simple terms of humanity.

It is from this standpoint that we should approach the question of the so-called "social equality." The meaning back of this Southern dogma which declares that there is to be no social equality between the races is that the integrity of the two races is to be preserved. To my mind this is a perfectly justifiable position and can be defended in the interest of the welfare of the Negro as well as the white race. For this reason the races should be separated by such social barriers as are necessary to preserve the purity of the blood of the two peoples. We should seek by every social provision to preserve the safety of the home of the black as well as the white from any violation of this social edict. But no other barriers or discriminations

are justified save those which are for the highest welfare of both races.

But many of us are coming to see that before this human approach can become socially effective there must be a human sympathy. This can only come from a Christian consciousness. If the Negro is human then he is God's child and he is my brother. If we accept the teachings of Jesus Christ, then this is inescapable. That the Negro is "one of the least of my brethren" may be granted, but when we have granted that we must meet the Christ test in itself, that our attitude to Him shall be judged by our attitude toward one of these least of His brethren.

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### A USABLE PIECE OF COMMUNITY MACHINERY

WILL W. ALEXANDER

THE COMMISSION ON INTER-RACIAL CO-OPERATION, organized soon after the armistice, is made up of southern men and women. It has sought to bring together in each southern community those persons who are interested in Negro welfare, or who are sufficiently open-minded to consider the question. There are eight hundred counties in the South having more than ten per cent of Negro population. Each of these has been studied, and in most of them some white and colored citizens have been found who agreed as to the need for some sort of coöperation in handling those matters in the community which affects both racial groups.

In many instances these committees have very little more than a sense of need and a willingness to try to meet it. They do not see very clearly what should be done. They are, however, open-minded and interested, and within these groups are those people of the South who are most interested in bringing to our entire population the benefits of modern social development. The others are such as may be led toward community-mindedness.

Over against this is the fact that it is often very difficult for social agencies to function for Negroes. One southern city is reported to have made a social survey in coöperation with one of the national agencies, and at an expenditure of several thousand dollars. Although forty per